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only by being associated with them, because, if we have no personal knowledge of and reverence for the men, their works have no magnetic value to us, and to regard them as it is fashionable to do, is as weak as to string pebbles because they have been packed with pearls. Art should be judged independently of artists, but we must still admit in all cases an autographic value even to the artistically worthless work of a genius, and while we treasure the pictures of the really great old masters simply because they were theirs, we must never permit them to interfere with our individual judgments in matters of Art.

Letters

ON LANDSCAPE PAINTING.*

NO. IX.

DEAR SIR:—If you have ever ascended a high mountain, even by a well-defined path, you must have encountered many difficulties, in crag and chasm, and other unforeseen obstacles, and have, at least, practically learned, that a short sentence of directions involved miles of toilsome labor, and it is thus with the precepts and practice of Art; especially in the direction I have endeavored to point out. But believing it to be the direct path to the main summit, I could not commend an easier way to a secondary elevation. As far as my experience and observation extend, I have uniformly found that coldness and opacity of color, stiffness and hardness of contour, with a general repulsiveness in effect, characterize, for the most part, the early efforts of the conscientious student of Nature. He often becomes disheartened, and almost persuaded, on comparing his own with the productions of the mature artist, that the beauty of the latter is the result of deviation from, rather than adherence to the truth. In such an inference he may be greatly mistaken, as will appear, on close examination, and instead of being regarded as discouraging, it should be construed in the opposite direction. In the first place, much practice and observation are indispensable to the acquirement of the mechanical skill necessary to express the precision with the *delicacy* of Nature's outlines; so that the first endeavors will invariably result in hardness, if not ungracefulness, just in proportion to the conscientiousness of the effort; and then, if the student be peculiarly sensitive to the attraction of form, color is sure to be overlooked, and even so far as observed, his representation of it will more likely be too cold than otherwise, for the great mass of local color, out of sunlight, is, at least, neutral, inclining to coolness, and even the additional warmth imparted by sunlight is attributable to its glow as much as to its actual warmth in color. And this glow, be it remembered, is the great charm and secret of light, most difficult to realize.

Now, I have already stated that imitation, if ever desirable, is unattainable ex-

cept to a very limited extent, and above all, most limited in reference to the glow of sunlight. If, then, we attempt to express it by matching its local color, the inherent lack of the glowing quality in our pigments, defeats the aim, and as warmth is the local distinctive quality of the light, we find, by increasing its apparent warmth, a nearer approach to the glowing is attained. This may be called one of the licenses of Art, or rather one of its modes for attaining a more perfect representation of that which is inimitable in Nature. As a general rule, then, we must express the real by increasing the apparent warmth of light, or, at least, keep on the warm side rather than the cold. And, further, in regard to hardness of outline; the forms of objects—the lines of separation or relief from each other—are easily misconceived, or not truly estimated by the eye. We perceive objects in juxtaposition to be decidedly detached from each other, and so they are, but rarely by any uniform line of separation, either dark or light, though occasionally sharp and cutting in these respects; but more frequently they are blended or assimilated with each other, so that the real cause of separation is found in a few points of sharp light or dark, aided as may be by color. The principle of relief or separation of parts is one of the most subtle and capricious in Nature, and accordingly, most likely to perplex the young student, since it never ceases to be a puzzle to the practised artist. If we cannot follow all the modes by which Nature carries out this principle, we must adopt such as are found to be most sure and practicable, and, at the same time, most beautiful. Among them is that of *variety*, that is, unequal hardness and softness, of contour, contrast of color, and abruptness and gradation in light and dark; for example, any prominent object uniformly relieved by the same strength of outline, however beautiful in itself, may thereby become offensive, yet Nature often thus presents herself: on the other hand, she as often varies that relief as above stated, and we feel its superior beauty. The trunk of a tall tree, or a long line of horizon, objectionable because of their monotony, become agreeable by inequality of relief, losing their contour in one place, and sharply defining it in another. This may suffice for the present to indicate somewhat of the process by which Art transcribes Nature, not only selecting her most beautiful and expressive forms, but choosing with equal care among the various influences by which they are affected in relation to each other, and it may be also taken as a hint in reference to what are termed licenses of Art.

If you find, that in order to obtain the glow of light, you must increase its warmth of color, you are licensed to do it; if continued sharpness of outline is offensive, you are licensed to vary it, because Nature herself is variable on these points, and because one condition is more beautiful than the other. But when it is simply a question of choice, there is no license, *that* signifying the liberty to deviate from law, and since Art is inadequate to represent *all* Nature's beauty with equal truthfulness, there is no law to interfere with whatsoever license that shall be found to increase its representative power. The extent of such license must for ever remain a disputable question.

But I believe that none are desirable which oppose any of the great truths of Nature, and that it is rather permission to exaggerate certain points in order to represent their real importance, as by increasing the warmth of light to express its glow, or to give more than natural intensity to a dark, in order to express the force of surrounding light, and, if needs be, to keep subordinate objects from impertinent obtrusiveness, by subduing their natural attractiveness, whether of details, color, or magnitude. To express the apparent height of a mountain, it is found necessary to exaggerate the real elevation in the representation: this is a license not opposed to truth, but essential to its realization. Whatever, then, may be the extent of Art-license, one thing is certain, it can never be profitably exercised but for the more complete expression of the sentiment of Nature, material and spiritual, wherein we discern the true mission of Art.

Perhaps we may pursue the subject of license still further to advantage. In requiring adherence to truthful representation, I wish not to be understood as insisting on literal portraiture, even in cases of actual view painting, that is, with regard to the entire details of any given scene. There can be no scene worthy of being painted, that does not possess certain characteristic features, which constitute its interest. These features are obvious at a glance, and must be preserved inviolate; there are others more or less subordinate,—such should receive attention according to their relative importance; and there are still others of no importance at all, and may be disposed of at the pleasure of the artist, so long as they are not rendered obtrusive. Now, the artist is not only licensed, but enjoined to modify, or entirely omit all these subordinate details, whenever they detract from the beauty, or other interest of predominant features; when he has acquired the knowledge necessary to do it with certainty. He may displace a tree, for instance, if disagreeable, or render it a more perfect one of its kind if retained, but the elevations and depressions of the earth's surface composing the middle ground and distance, the magnitude of objects, and extent of space presented in the view, characteristic outline, undulating or angular, of all the great divisions, may not be changed in the least perceptible degree, most especially the mountain and hill forms. On these God has set his signet, and Art may not remove it when the picture professes to represent the scene. Nor is it to be desired; for the ever-changing sky sends down the winged messengers of cloud and sunshine that overrule the refractory contours, unfolding to the utmost the beauty of the beautiful, and veiling with discriminating care the unlovely portions.

View painting is ranked as the inferior department of landscape Art, and, generally speaking, it is so, inasmuch as it precludes the exercise of the creative power in invention and composition. But it does not preclude the action of the imagination in all that relates to effect and color, and although it is not permitted to violate the integrity of portraiture, it may invest its portraits with the same profound expression that the imagination impresses on the ideal picture. And while it affords the only safe ground for the unimaginative, it

* Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1855, by
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New York.

is one for the most signal achievements of the imaginative artist, in demonstration of his superiority. For his loftier stature enables him to overlook, without trespass, the enclosure which bounds the view of humbler minds—he comprehends the capabilities of the material presented in all its relations to human sympathy (whether already combined in the actual view, or noted on the tablet of memory), and he reads the historic record which time has written on all things for our instruction, through all the stages of their silent transition, since the period when this verdant earth was a lifeless, molten chaos, "void and without form."

However subordinate the department of view-painting may be considered in its general sense, it rises at times to the level of the highest creations of Art, so far as the expression of its elements is concerned. Many an actual picture of this description may be found amongst the primitive wilds of Nature, where

"Upon her bosom yet
After the lapse of untold centuries,
The freshness of her far-beginning lies."

The reverent imagination ceases to exult in its own conscious power to change and recreate, while it contemplates the great miracle of God's creation, "which still goes on in silence"—where all deficiency in picturesqueness is more than supplied by that "freshness of the far-beginning" of things which connects us with the past, and symbolizes our immortality.

I would not limit the creative power of Art, nor undervalue its importance; it may not be possible to define or know its limit, but we do know that it is worthily employed, when it reproduces by actual transcript, or otherwise, a sensible demonstration of

"The perpetual work of thy creation,
Finished, yet removed for ever,"

and unfolds by the "eloquence of beauty," and signs of "healing sympathy," perpetual sources of enlightened and pure enjoyment.

Yours truly,
A. B. Burdett.

WANDERINGS IN THE SOUTHWEST.

No. II.

SAN ANTONIO, June 1st, 1855.

I WROTE in my last of my arrival at the town of Anagua, the residence of Mr. Cromwell and family, black and white. Mr. C. is chief magistrate, post-master, and the only free white man in the place, which, with one exception, is the smallest place that I ever saw; that was a town in Georgia, where the cars stopped a moment, and I was unable to institute any comparison, for it was fastened with a padlock. I was glad to find a place where I could sleep under a roof, for it seemed a severe trial to lay down under the open sky on the bare ground, where I had heard there were so many poisonous insects and reptiles, but I had something to learn. The sun had risen before me the next morning, when I strolled down to the San Antonio river. It is here about one half the size of the Guadalupe, where I crossed it the day before. In other respects, the characteristics are much the same—turbid, winding, with a current of

about five miles an hour. Its channel is about fifty feet below the level of the prairie, and the banks, often precipitous, where the water has undermined them, show sand, with a deep, black alluvium overlying it, and containing shells of *Anodonta*, *Bulime* and *Helices* of species now living, and found in great abundance on the uplands. I have seen no pebbles or stones as yet, in Texas. Grapes of three species I saw growing on its banks, and the pecan tree, I saw here for the first time. It is a tree very much resembling the pig-nut hickory of the North, but its branches make an angle more acute, and arched like the elm. Of the elm I saw three species.

I spent most of the forenoon on the banks of the river, shadowed by the moss-draped trees, and lulled by the murmur of the water among the fallen trunks. The cardinal grosbeak showed its scarlet plumage in the light green of the willow that dabbled its leaves in the river just where it took a short turn under a high, thicket-crowned, caving bank. A negro came down with two fish-lines, with enormous hooks, and after baiting them with the entrails of a fowl, he drove the sharpened ends of the poles into the bank, and sat down to wait the result. "What sort of fish do you catch here?" I asked. "Cat, sah." "No other kind do you catch in dis river?" "Oh, yes, sah, buffalo-fish, but dem we don't catel." Soon the fellow drew out a cat-fish, weighing about six pounds, of a species he called the yellow cat, and soon after I helped him with the other line to another of smaller size, which he called the blue-cat. The river abounded, he said, in gars and alligators, and no one dared to bathe in it. Mr. C. moved from East Tenn. three years since, is well satisfied with the country, has had less sickness than in Tennessee. He has a very good garden, and his table at dinner was well supplied with peas, beans and beets, and it was but the fourth of May. He told me that the Irish potatoe, though it grows well, loses its eyes after the third year, and it is necessary to use new stock from the North. He showed me the persimmon tree, which grows here twenty feet high. The anaqua tree bears a berry about as large as a garden currant, and much esteemed for food. These trees grow in clusters on the prairies bordering the streams, in company with the hackberry, are generally of the same height, and unite their tops so close as to appear like one tree with many trunks. These furnish a grateful shade for cattle. Sometimes the oaks are found grouped in this way, and they are all known as "motts" in this country. A little boy brought to me the passion flower (*P. incarnata*), which seems to be spread widely over the country on the borders of the prairies. The root of a shrub called the Spanish apple was shown to me. It is long and succulent, and may be almost entirely reduced to a paste by pounding. It is much esteemed as an emollient application as a substitute for slippery elm, and I do not doubt could be used as a valuable article of diet for the sick-room. After dinner I resumed my journey. The road led up the left bank of the river, but far enough from it to avoid the ravines and wooded bottoms. The rich, level prairie is left on the right, and here it is rolling and interspersed with "motts" and trees as tastefully as they could be arranged by

Art, and it was so decidedly English that it would not have been difficult to have fancied that I stood on Hampstead heath again, and was looking off towards Highgate.

There are no wild cattle on these prairies; they are all thoroughly domesticated, and are often quite indisposed to get out of your path. The droves of horses, though no less sleek and gentle, seem to have less inertia to overcome. An ass and her hopeful full-grown, burly-headed son plant themselves by the path, and regard you with a curiosity so green as to make you laugh. I was passing a pond of standing water; the road led along that side of it which had been in more prosperous times its outlet, and I turned my horse's head to go around it. It was the first and the last collection of standing water I have seen in Texas. Alders grew in the mud, on the west side, and black-birds were holding a convocation there, with a solemn white crane (*ardea occidentalis*), perched upon a tree in the centre as a presiding elder. I thought of an ornithological friend in New York who wished the skin of that very bird, and was sorry it was so inconvenient for him to get it. Plover were feeding along the margin of the water, and they seemed to know I had no gun; at a ravine, green and smooth, was another assemblage of cattle. I have not seen as many grouse or prairie fowl as I expected, but this is their breeding season, and they have left for parts unknown. The cactus (*opuntia*) shows itself in the sandy margins of the motts where the red-ants have prepared the soil for them. As the sun went down, its low horizontal rays threw into relief the undulations of the prairie, with the deeper valleys in shadow running into the sombre green of the river bottoms. I thought I never saw a landscape more harmonious. There seemed to be nothing out of place, not a bush or weed, not a dead leaf or dry blade of grass was anywhere to be seen. All was young, strong life, just passing into the "twilight of repose." I could but pause on the brow of a hill and wonder that so beautiful a scene should be without human habitation, and that fire and flood had made it what it was. It was nearly dark when I reached the domicile I had been looking for. It was built like an overseer's house, two cabins under one roof, a popular style in Texas, and one which gives a fine space under cover, yet open to the breezes, and there the table is set. This serves as a general assembly-room. Sometimes it has a floor, oftener not. The proprietor was an old Texan, and his son, now seventeen years of age, was a native of the State. Cotton had been grown in a field adjoining the State, but it did not turn out a profitable crop, and his attention was directed exclusively to stock, of which he had about two thousand head. He was living with but few comforts, you would say with but few necessities. In a cabin adjoining the one I have mentioned, a wretched hovel, lived a large family of blacks, and in the evening the males danced a "break-down" for our amusement, while the females, made visible by the flame of a small fire on the heath, sat on the ground, not seeming to take any interest in the "fun." When I rose the next morning a heavy fog enveloped the place. I saddled my horse, and, waiting for breakfast, took a look at the premises. Two